New Armored Car Built for President

By Robert W. Irvin 8/27/68
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DETROIT, Mich., Aug. 26—The White House is getting another armored Lincoln Continental limousine for use by President Johnson.

The car, a 1968 model Lincoln, is being provided by the Ford Motor Co. under the same nominal lease arrangements that has been used for past presidential limousines, such as Franklin Roosevelt's "sunshine special" and Dwight Eisenhower's "bubble top" car.

The car is being built by Lehmann-Peterson Inc., of Chicago, the company that builds $16,000 custom Lincoln limousines for sale through Lincoln-Mercury dealers.

The company began work on the vehicle last year. The cost of converting it for presidential use, paid by Ford which will retain nominal title to the car, is estimated at from $225,000 to as much as $500,000. Ford will lease it to the Government for $100 a month.

The car has many of the same features that have been built into the current presidential limousine.

About 1600 pounds of bullet-proof armorplate was added. The same bullet-resistant glass used in jet fighters and armored cars has been installed.

"A lot of things that are new in the way of communications equipment, protective devices and weaponry are in the car," said one source. "It incorporates additional knowledge gained in the past four years."

Like the presidential limousine now in use, the new one has a blowout-proof system for the tires. Because the car weighs almost six tons, it rides on heavy-duty truck tires. Inside the tires is a steel wheel, bonded to a hard rubber tread. In case of a high-speed blowout, the inner wheel would enable the driver to keep control of the vehicle.

The new car was armorplated by a Cincinnati firm. It required a special suspension system to accommodate the extra weight.

The basic engine is the 462-cubic inch V-8 used in Lincolns and the Continental Mark III, rated at 340 horsepower. But it, too, was souped up and also tuned so that it can travel at a slow speed for parades and accelerate quickly to high speeds.

The car is probably about the same size as the modified 1961 Lincoln—21 feet long. Retractable foot stands have been built into the side for use, it is assumed, by Secret Service men.

The car has three built-in television sets and at least two radio telephones.